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MORMON ONENESS.

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A common objection against Protestant Christianity is that there are so many sects and parties among Christians. In Utah this objection is most frequently in the mouths of unbelievers, Romanists and Mormons. With superficial thinkers and stern ecclesiastics it avails little that there is an underlying unity among Christian denominations that is most real and solid; "a unity of essential beliefs and purpose, though not of ceremonial." Hence the following mode of argument at times becomes useful, and is now addressed to thoughtful Latter-day Saints.

The basis for it is an article from the pen of William Gill Mills, published in 1888. Mr. Mills was for many years an able and

sincere Latter-day Saint, as appears from many articles, prose and poetry, in old files of the *Millennial Star*.

The last years of his life were spent in the earnest advocacy of Protestant Christianity. He knew whereof he wrote concerning church history.

The Mormon church asserts that the whole Christian world has apostatized from the Gospel of Christ, and as proof points to the fact that Christianity is divided into sects and parties.

Mormons teach that it is necessary in order to come to the unity of the faith, that "we be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness;" and that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, were designed to be in the church to effect and preserve that unity. They affirm that God has restored these offices through Joseph Smith; that they have them, and so have that unifying and preserving power; and that they are not divided. They are the

true church of Christ, they say, as is shown by their oneness in faith and action.

But what does the history of the Mormon church show? Has wonderful oneness marked its development? Which is the true Mormon church? Is it the Brighamite, the Morrisite, the Strangite, the Rigdonite, the Whitmerite, the Hendrickite, or the Josephite? How by their oneness can one tell? For that is their own sign. Is it not a fact that despite all claims to superior oneness Mormonism has made sects rapidly since its organization? A sect for every three years of its existence would be a great record. Now let us see:

After Joseph's death Sidney Rigdon, who had been ordained by Smith as prophet, seer and revelator, and who was one of the first Presidency, carried numbers away, forming a sect; Lyman Wight led away a company to Texas, forming another sect; Gladden Bishop struck out for himself as a prophet, another sect resulting; James J. Strang and William Smith, each at the head of a sect, had the Mormon afflatus; Father

Cutler organized a church, and David Whitmer, who was ordained by Joseph Smith the president of the church, continued another church; Joseph Morris claimed the prophetship from God, and gathered around him men of intelligence, talent and sound morals, claiming to be the true church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Another Mormon church exists in California, under the inspiration of one George Dove. Another man called Williams operates separately now in the State of Washington, with a band of converts. Elder J. G. Adams went off with a colony and "gathered" to Palestine. Brigham Young led his followers from Nauvoo to Utah in 1847. And several lesser lights in the church, but equally claiming to receive revelation from God, and to converse with Christ, tried their hands at sect making. It is well known that besides the preceding, Hendrick, Brewster, Emmett, and a host of other elders were in the enjoyment of new and bewildering revelation about who should succeed Joseph Smith. Then among later instances

were John Forsgreen, who called himself David and a prophet; and a Jew, for many years honestly a Mormon, who set up shop in the prophet and church line. There was the "Godbe Movement," in 1869, which showed itself daring and heroic, bearding "the Lion of the Lord" in his very den.

And last for our purpose, "young" Joseph Smith, because he is the son of his father, is the head of the Reorganized church, a church strongly antagonistic to the Utah church, and branding it as a sect sadly apostate. Nor are these a puny body of witnesses, claiming as they now do, a membership of 45,000; four hundred and fifty congregations; and mission work all over the world.

Thus we see that between Joseph Smith's death in 1844, and Brigham's death in 1877, that is, within thirty-three years, fifteen well known elders led off believers, each band solemnly claiming to be the true church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Learn here that their unity did not unite. And note further, that of the first "Twelve

Apostles" ordained by Joseph Smith and others, six apostatized; and of that quorum, usually kept full, twelve men have apostatized, if Moses Thatcher is an apostate apostle. Several of the first Presidency of the Seventies have apostatized, as well as high priests, bishops, seventies and elders.

Yet the *Semi-weekly Deseret News*, January 4th, 1898, speaks of the recent Lambeth conference virtually giving "an official approval of the fractured condition of the Christian world, and a denial of the need of the offices of (Mormon) Apostles, Teachers, etc., for the unification of the church." Where is there a church in a more fractured condition than that of the Latter-day Saints, with its score of sects?

They have neither had the grace nor the power to keep either themselves or others in the unity of the faith. Their claim of being the Church of Christ because of oneness of faith is abortive. And the results show all the Mormon sects to be apostates, according to their own method of reasoning.

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